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STATEMENT TO UN DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE

SESSION ON EAST TIMOR

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Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of my oppressed Melanesian brothers and sisters of East Timor.

My name is Martin Enda, and I come from Papua New Guinea where I am a practising Lawyer. Today I am representing the Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace & Development of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Melansian Council of Churches.

This is not the first time a representative of the Papua New Guinea Churches has addressed this Committee. In March 1985 this Committee held a seminar in Port Moresby and on that occasion two delegates from the Melansian Council of Churches addressed the Committee members and urged the United Nations to commit itself with renewed viguour to the elimination of all forms of colonisation, including Indonesian colonisation of East Timor. The delegates also reminded the Committee that their presence in Port Moresby in 1985 coincided with the Tenth anniversay of the Papua New Guinea Independence.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, I am a free citizen of a Society which gained Independence in 1975, the year that neighbouring East Timor was invaded by Indonesia and robbed of its Independence. During the 13 years that have passed since 1975, Papua New Guinea has run its own affairs as a sovereign Independent Nation. As such Papua New Guinea is a member of the United Nations, the British Commonwealth and the South Pacific Forum. As a Parliamentary democracy, free elections have been contested by indigenous political parties.

Basic freedoms of expression, assembly, movement and equality before the law are guaranteed under our own Constitution.

This National experience has been reflected in my own life. As a first generation Post-Colonial Papua New Guinean citizen, I have grown up enjoying the dignity, self-respect, and opportunity that comes with being a free citizen in a free country. I have studied my own culture and history, been active politically, travelled abroad, developed my professional career, defended cases of injustice before the Courts, and enjoyed free association within my Community without official hindrance or fear of recrimination.

Contrast this position and proud experience, however, with that of the East Timorese people during the last 13 years, remembering that they too are, Melanesian, belonging to the same region as Papua New Guinea and are entitled to the same universal human rights. Whilst not wishing to pretend that Papua New Guinea is perfect or free of many of the problems familiar to the Third World, there is no doubt that the situation in East Timor has been starkly different by comparison. I thank God that Providence disposed I grew up in Papua New Guinea and not in East Timor.

The differences between our two societies are fundamental and tragic. Espousing values and policies analogous to those which inspired Papua New Guinea's pioneering Pangu Pati and Vanuatu's Vanuaku Pati, the East Timorese were frustrated in their bid to build a new society by Indonesia's brutal and illegal invasion of 1975, and subsequent occupation. Indonesia's military had no legitimate claim to East Timor or valid rationale for their intervention any more than if they had chosen to intervene in Papua New Guinea with which Indonesia shares a common border. Furthermore this act of criminal aggression contravened UNITED NATIONS principles in defiance of this Decolonisation Committee and the UNITED NATIONS Security Council itself. In the process

the fundamental right to self-determination of all colonial peoples, including the East Timorese, was denied and continues to be denied to this point - a fact on which most UNITED NATION member states agree, including those supportive of Indonesia.

The enormity of this crime was compounded by the infliction of incredible suffering on this small and relatively defenceless people. Some 200,000 East Timorese, nearly one in three of the population, died as a result of the war and associated factors such as famine. Human Rights abuses becomes the daily bread of ordinary Timorese as Indonesia sought to consolidate its occupation by 'disappearing' or imprisoning resistance fighters and resettling tribal people in Indonesia controlled centers.

The general facts of these abuses are well know to this Committee. Thankfully they have lessened in intensity and scale in recent years as Indonesia's military have institutionalised control over most aspects of East Timorese life, In repeating them there, the point I want to make is that this is how East Timor began its miserable existence as an Indonesian colony at the same time as Papua New Guinea next door was taking its first steps into the full sunlight of Independence to the applause of the World and its own people.

The second point I want to make in this comparative analysis is that today in East Timor oppression is institutionalised to the very grassroots in contrast to other societies in the region like Papua New Guinea which are organised democratically.

There are no indigenous political parties in East Timor, except of course, Fretilin which is outlawed and has to operate underground. There is no accountability of the administration to the people. There is not free press providing independent information, and a forum for debate and criticism. There is no judicial system independent of the 'executive' offering protection to victims of injustice. (On the contrary it is worth noting that far from being prosecuted for abuses of Human Rights in East Timor, most of the military officers responsible for the campaign of terror and in-

timidation over the years have been promoted for their efforts). There is no education system offering education in Timorese history, culture and language. In otherwords, those institutions which are fundamental to the health and good ordering of society and the exercise of basic human rights either do not exist or are subservient tot he purposes of Indonesia's continued occupation.

This situation is reflected in the faces and body language of the Timorese which many have testified over the years to being excessively sombre and withdrawn. The East Timorese are not free people. It is abhorrent that they should have to live in a pervasive climate of fear and nervousness which precludes normal relaxed social and political intercourse both within their own society and with the world at large from which they are kept isolated. Indonesia's military claim to have exceeded East Timor's previous colonial master, Portugal, in their administration of the territory. While this may be true physically and materially, there can be no doubt that on the much more important and fundamental level of human rights they are inflicting classic 19th century colonial practises with which the long-suffering Timorese are all too familiar.

Regrettably my own Government has chosen to ignore the reality of East Timor and to support Indonesia's takeover. Papua New Guinea has voted consistently in support of Indonesia at the United Nations and has denied Fretilin spokespersons visas to visit Papua New Guinea to give legitimate public expression to their hopes for Independence. This is to be deplored. Unpalatable though the truth may be, this policy of acquiescence is evidence on the one hand of the continued inordinate influence of Australia on Papua New Guinea's foreign policy, and on the other, of Papua New Guinea's fear of it's large and threatening neighbour, Indonesia. I hasten to add, however, that it is not in my opinion a genuine reflection of the opinions of the people or politicians of Papua New Guinea as a whole.

Indonesia has capitalised on Papua New Guinea's readiness to give considerations of self-interest priority over human rights and other international obligations. In February 1987, the two Governments ratified a new Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation. Twelve months later, in January this year, former Prime Minister Mr. Paias Wingti visited Jakarta where his long meeting with President Suharto ended in fulsome expressions of warmth and friendship, talk of Indonesian aid to Papua New Guinea and acceptance by President Suharto to visit our country. The relationship is also being cultivated at other levels including in the academic, commercial and intelligence domains. Looking furtherafield, Jakarta is concerned to duplicate this sort of contact with other Pacific Island States through the good offices of Port Moresby. one is forced to conclude that at the level of Government the short-term prospects for a regional initiative in East Timor's favour are not positive despite the compelling moral and legal arguments to the contrary.

However, it is precisely this depressing fact of polictical life which makes the role of this Committee and the UN Secretary-General in particular so significant in respect of the East Timor question.

The East Timorese people and their many friends internationally rightly look to the United Nations for a principled settlement of this appalling injustice. In the absence of any act of self-determination, the United Nations at the very least has a clear responsibility to keep the issue on its agenda and to insist on free access to the territory for human rights and humanitarian organisations. Official concern of this nature and continued international scrutiny offers the East Timor a level of protection it would morally be reprehensible to withhold. It also applies continued pressure on Jakarta and its supporters to relax and normalise the situation to the advantage of the East Timorese people.

In conclusion, however, the Papua New Guinean Church Bodies I represent, would like to urge the United Nations to move beyond this minimalist position. The people of East Timor are entitled to the same freedoms as other peoples. Nothing that has happened over the

past 13 (thirteen) years has forfeited their right to self-determination. Indeed their suffering and heroic resistance has earned then this right many times over. Consistent with this right, the United Nations should engage in direct consultation with their legitimate representatives, including the resistance. This I submit should become the objective of the United Nation over the next twelve months if the already protracted negociations are not to stretch on ad infinitum until they themselves become an injustice perpetrated by the very system the Timorese rightly look to for their deliverance.

Thank you.